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| adult education                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |  | compensatory education                      |  | summer programs                                                                                                                                                                                         |  | culturally deprived                                                                                                                                                            |  |
| reading                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |  | junior high school                          |  | socially disadvantaged                                                                                                                                                                                  |  |                                                                                                                                                                                |  |
| 17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 280 WORDS) The Homework Helper program involves approximately 250 academically superior high school students who are tutoring approximately 600 fourth and fifth grade retarded readers. The purposes are to provide models so that elementary school children can identify with successful students; to give the children help with basic skills; to encourage high school students to remain in school; and to motivate high school students toward greater academic achievement so that they too can become tutors.<br>The Junior High School Reading Clinic program is oriented toward the pupil rather than toward the curriculum. Its aims are to motivate the children toward learning, to utilize materials of interest and of relevance to the children, and to teach the children the skills they need. In a summer program for retarded readers, six clinicians see 240 children, grouped in fours, twice weekly for seven weeks. Interest, enthusiasm, and attendance are high. The median reading gain in the seven weeks is .9 on a scale of -1.1 to +3.3. Along with the regular program of remedial reading service, two special projects have been tried out on a pilot study basis. One is a workshop in problem-solving techniques. The other, "Supplementary Teaching Assistance in Reading," invites the parents of children in the clinic to attend a series of lessons, demonstrations, and discussion periods focused on the reading instruction their children are receiving. |  |                                             |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                         |  |                                                                                                                                                                                |  |
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SESSION: MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF THE CULTURALLY-DEPRIVED  
PUPIL-JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL.

ANNUAL MEETINGS

INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION

APRIL 29 - MAY 2, 1964

Margaret Gibbons

Moderator and Panelist

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE  
Office of Education

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### General Introduction

In order to understand the nature, needs, and problems of the segment of the population we will be discussing today, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by "culturally deprived". Actually, this is a misnomer. For many of those working in this area, the more accurate term is "socially disadvantaged". These people do not lack a culture - far from it - but they are at serious socio-economic disadvantages in the face of the predominant cultural expectations and values.

Some characteristics of the socially disadvantaged concentrated in large urban areas are these:

- 1) At the bottom of the economic scale. If they work, their occupations are mainly in unskilled areas. Many of these people only occasionally have jobs, and many subsist on welfare payments alone.
- 2) Many are recent migrants to the city. Some come from other countries and some from other areas of the U. S. where they suffered from poverty and lack of opportunity for good education and moving into the general culture.
- 3) Many are members of minority groups and have felt, and have truly been, excluded and isolated from the general community.
- 4) The adult members have often spent a minimal number of years in school. Some, but certainly not all, do not fully understand the importance of formal education for their children and they are unable to provide the knowledge and motivation that are necessary for the child to get a good start in school.
- 5) With a good number of these people, there is a language problem. Often their children come to school without proficiency in the language of the school. Also some are Spanish-speaking but we believe they are without true proficiency in that language as well. Therefore, there is limited experience with verbal communication upon which to build.
- 6) There may be multi-problems at home. In addition to the strains of poverty, many families are broken - one of the parents is missing from the home, most often the father.
- 7) School turnover is high. Families move often and children change schools frequently.
- 8) Turnover of school teachers is also high in these areas.
- 9) Teachers may become discouraged by the array of problems presented by these children and particularly by the staggering numbers in which they appear. The children sense this discouragement and it may hinder their development and achievement. Certainly it doesn't help.

With all of the difficulties mentioned above, it is not too surprising that we find another problem - that of a very high proportion of reading retardates among these children. Whereas in the middle-class communities, reading retardation averages from 10-20% of the school population, in this depressed area as much as 80% of the children are reading retardates. The consequences, of course, are limited educational, vocational, and economic opportunities. The problem of this very high incidence of reading retardation in such an area has been receiving increasing attention in recent years.

Today the panel participants are here to tell you what they are attempting to do about this problem.

#### MOBILIZATION FOR YOUTH READING PROGRAMS

##### Presentation by Marilyn Gibbons

Mobilization For Youth is a broad-scale, comprehensive experimental-demonstration program designed to attack the problem of juvenile delinquency. Its over-all premise is that no effort to prevent juvenile delinquency can succeed unless it provides young people with genuine opportunities to behave differently - through creative educational and exciting work programs. In addition, it is deemed imperative to involve local residents directly in the effort to improve social and economic opportunities for young people within their community.

Mobilization For Youth in New York City is a joint project under the direction of social scientists sponsored by the City of New York, the Ford Foundation, and the Federal Government. Mobilization works closely with the New York City Board of Education.

Mobilization's is a community-oriented approach which emphasizes programs in the following areas: the world of work, education, community organization, services to individuals and families, and group services.

The scope of the entire agency is formidable.

*2 of 4 reading programs*  
I will be describing only one division within the agency, the Education Division. There are many programs within the Department of Education. They are Curriculum Planning and Development, Teacher Education, Early Childhood Education, Guidance, and last, but not least, there are four different reading programs.

Because of time limitations, I shall briefly mention one of the four reading programs and then devote the rest of my time to another, with which I am intimately involved, the Junior High School Reading Clinic.

It is necessary at this point to say that if service was the sole objective of these MFY programs, the job would be relatively simple. However, while service is an intrinsic part of these programs, it is not the major objective. It is the commitment and obligation of the educational programs in

MFY to translate its work and instruction into improved classroom practises and teaching. This is the only way, in terms of sheer economics, to deal with the tremendous numbers of reading retardates in this geographical area, as well as in other areas throughout the country. (In the MFY area, there are 23,000 school children).

To return to the reading programs, the first to be discussed is the Homework Helper program which is not quite what its title implies. It is primarily oriented toward the improvement of reading.

The program involves approximately 250 academically superior high school students who are tutoring approximately 600 fourth and fifth grade retarded readers. Training and supervision of the tutors is under the direction of Master Teachers from the public schools.

The program runs 2 hours a day, 4 days a week.

The tutors work with pupils on a 1 to 1 basis from 3-5 P.M. 3 days a week. Some pupils attend once a week; others twice a week. The tutors are paid for their instructional work with the pupils and for participation in the training sessions conducted by the Master Teachers.

The purposes of the Homework Helper program are many-sided:

- 1) Perhaps most important, to provide models for the elementary school pupils - identification, for perhaps the first time, with a successful student.
- 2) Another purpose, which is self-evident, is to provide individual assistance to elementary school pupils in need of help with basic skills.
- 3) To encourage high school youngsters to remain in school (through economic aid).
- 4) To motivate high school students toward improved academic achievement (so that they too can become tutors).

It is too early to evaluate this program in terms of reading score gains. This will be done later this spring. But this much we know thus far. Participation in the program is voluntary. There are more applicants, both as tutors and pupils, than can be accommodated at this point. Regular attendance on the part of the tutors has been 95%. The pupils' attendance runs from 80-85% of the scheduled lessons. School administrators, teachers, tutors, pupils, and parents have commended the program many, many times. Many classroom teachers have seen positive changes in the children's school work.

*Satis. popularity & attendance*

The second program to be discussed is the Junior High School Reading Clinic of Mobilization For Youth.

There are several characteristics and problems of the junior high school age group in the MFY area which make the work of the Junior High School Reading Clinic particularly critical.

- 1) The program and structure in junior high school are such that the major emphasis is on content rather than on basic skills.
- 2) Peer pressures are particularly intense at this age. Hence, there is likely to be more alienation from the school than at any other time.
- 3) Reality is closing in. The end of school years is in sight, either via dropping out or successfully completing high school. In addition, the recognition that there will soon be a need for employment and the fear that they will not qualify cannot be ignored any longer.
- 4) The parents of low-achievers feel particularly hopeless at this stage. Of course, the children feel the same way.

The general orientation of the MFY Junior High School Reading Clinic is toward the pupil. It is not primarily a curriculum-oriented project. The major aims and tasks are to re-motivate the children toward learning, to utilize materials of interest and pertinence to him, and to teach the skills he needs. During all of this, many aspects are examined - materials, skills, methods, techniques, and their relationships.

This Clinic opened last summer with a seven-week program for retarded readers from the five junior high schools and two special schools for behavior problems in the area. Although referrals were processed through the schools, participation in the Clinic program was voluntary on the part of the children.

With six remedial reading clinicians on staff, 240 children were seen twice weekly for seven weeks in groups of four. Interest, enthusiasm, and attendance were all high. Many children came an hour early before lesson time to sit and read in the waiting room. There were more applicants than could be served in the program.

A selected group of 40 pupils was re-tested with standardized reading tests at the end of the seven-week program. Reading gains ranged from -1.1 to +3.3. The median gain was .9. The first thing learned from the summer program was that the children were willing and able to avail themselves of Clinic services on a regular basis.

What are some specific characteristics of the MFY Junior High School Reading Clinic population?

- 1) The children tend to be somewhat older than typical J. H. S. pupils because they have all repeated 1 or 2 grades in school. They are, therefore, closer to that age when they can drop out of school.

2) Ethnically, Puerto Rican and Negro children comprise the major portion of the Clinic population. 45% are Puerto Rican, 36% are Negro, and 19% are of other diverse backgrounds.

3) Reading levels range from complete non-readers to mid-6th grade level. The reading deficiencies are not particularly different from those found in any community but they are certainly more numerous.

This fall, with three remedial reading clinicians, a psychologist, and a psychiatric social worker on staff, the Clinic program was limited to approximately 90 children in order to allow time for research and experimentation on a pilot study basis.

While the regular program of remedial reading service has been carried on, two special projects have been developed and tried out on a pilot study basis.

One program, which appears very promising, evolved out of the insights and experiences gained from the Summer program by Mrs. Macomber, a reading clinician.

Mrs. Macomber devised a series of sequential lesson plans predicated upon the assumption that certain problem-solving techniques are common to all skill areas. Comprehension is not only a skill of reading. By working with problem-solving techniques, as illustrated by Jerome Bruner, first in isolation, then by teaching transfer, skills could be applied in whatever areas needed. The problem-solving techniques are studied first in game situations; for example, via the use of Cuisinere rods, dominoes, checkers, and chess.

The technique is as follows: the game is presented and analysed. The problem is analysed, the attack is discussed, a probable solution is developed, the problem is solved, and the answer checked according to procedure and hypothesis.

The same procedures and techniques utilized in the game situation were utilized with reading and study skills - such as vocabulary, outlining, writing summaries, etc.

The initial evaluation made by Mrs. Macomber was that problem-solving techniques tend to remain constant unless special attention is given by the teacher to the methods used by the student. In the early stages of the program, her students were unaware of the way the games were to be used and ignored the insights available through their own skills.

In essence, what Mrs. Macomber was trying to do, and did succeed in accomplishing, was to help these children to define and clarify what the problem was, determine an appropriate mode of attack, arrive at the solution, and understand why the solution and the attack were correct.

In addition to lessons devoted to comprehension skills, Mrs. Macomber designed and successfully utilized a series of lessons devoted to word attack skills which are taught as programmed lessons based upon B. F. Skinner's learning theories. These lessons teach consonant letter sounds, short and long vowel sounds, and sight words which are grouped by letter combinations and their sounds.

Initial results were promising but, of course, further evaluation under strict experimental conditions is necessary and this will be done. If this approach is shown to be a good one, there does not seem to be any reason why the same type of program cannot be used to teach other skills at varying levels of difficulty.

The second pilot study program conducted by the J.H.S. Reading Clinic is called "Supplementary Teaching Assistance in Reading", or "STAR".

It is believed that parents can play a unique and important role in influencing a child's motivation toward learning. With guidance and professional training by Clinic personnel, parents could become involved in their children's reading experiences. This could then have broad implications for developing in the child positive attitudes toward learning and reinforcing reading skills. To this end, the parents of the children in the Clinic were invited to attend a series of lessons, demonstrations, and discussion periods focused on the reading instruction their children were receiving.

In this program, the reading clinicians clarified for the parents of each child his reading strengths and weaknesses, demonstrated and taught specific techniques, and made available resource materials whereby additional reading help could be given at home. Also, the Clinic psychologist and social worker discussed with the parents the nature and needs of children at this particular age and with their particular learning difficulties. This was a particularly challenging program for the J. H. S. Clinic because of the growing independence of the children from the home.

On the average, 25% of the Clinic families attended these meetings. While this was far below the number hoped for, this attendance is considered excellent for this neighborhood where parent attendance at school meetings is extremely scattered and sparse.

The only evaluation that can be made at this time is impressionistic since the statistical data are not complete. Many of the parents who attended the meetings expressed great interest in learning more about their children's needs and problems, academic and otherwise, and, at the final meeting spoke freely of the fact that they felt much more open-minded and understanding about what their children were facing and going through. Many said this had resulted in a better home atmosphere. In addition, many mentioned the fact that their children who formerly never said a word about the Clinic to them became quite talkative and, sometimes, even willing to read with them once they learned that the parent had been at the Clinic and met with his teacher.

When these two programs have been evaluated later this spring, it is hoped that guidelines for future programs and projects can be drawn. This first year has been new and exciting, and certainly productive of many insights into the reading problems of the population MFF serves. The big job, that of putting these insights to work to evolve truly effective programs capable of being translated into a classroom setting, remains to be done. The promise seems to exist.